



NC HIDTA

NORTHERN CA HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA

Intelligence Bulletin

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(U) SCOPE: This intelligence bulletin is a product of the Northern California High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program (NC HIDTA) to provide situational awareness to local partners of developments relevant to narcotic threat topics. This intelligence bulletin includes summaries of recent reporting, and analysis from law enforcement, private sector and open sources which may be subject to updating as additional information becomes available.

(U//FOUO) Task Force Officers Seize Previously Unidentified Form of Heroin In San Francisco¹



(U) Left: Seized heroin approximately 2 x 1 inches.

(U) Source: NC HIDTA San Francisco Metropolitan Initiative Task Force Officer.

(U) Event

(U//FOUO) The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) San Francisco Field Division Agents and Task Force Officers (TFO) have potentially identified a new form of heroin within the Northern California High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NC HIDTA) Area of Responsibility (AOR). TFO reporting suggests that this glass-style heroin has recently been appearing throughout the NC HIDTA AOR, however, this particular seizure occurred in downtown San Francisco.

(U) Significance

(U//FOUO) Glass-style heroin represents an emerging threat for Law Enforcement (LE) throughout the NC HIDTA AOR, and highlights Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) innovation in their attempts to expand the marketability of heroin. Similar seizures throughout the AOR demonstrate DTO areas of influence and help determine the extent of the heroin problem.

(U) Key Judgements

- (U//FOUO) Glass-style heroin is likely purchased as is by local gangs directly from Mexican DTOs.
- (U//FOUO) Glass-style heroin is likely concentrated brown powder heroin.
- (U//FOUO) Glass-style heroin retains identifiable characteristics common with other heroin forms.
- (U//FOUO) Glass-style heroin is popular amongst heroin users likely due to its quality.

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(U//FOUO) Glass-style heroin is likely purchased as is by local gangs directly from Mexican DTOs. Per TFO reporting, a local Honduran drug distribution network in San Francisco has been purchasing glass-style heroin directly from MDTOs and Mexican gangs. Suspect interviews revealed that the heroin originated in Mexico and was shipped over the US border in glass form. Additionally, suspects suggest that larger, wholesale shipments of glass-style heroin are delivered to San Francisco before being further transported to outlying locations within the NC HIDTA AOR.

(U//FOUO) Glass-style heroin is likely concentrated brown powder heroin. Glass-style heroin is created by reducing Coca-Cola into a syrup, mixing powdered heroin into the reduction, and cooling the mixture. However, according to a Senior Forensic Chemist at the DEA's Western Laboratory, "Over the years, the lab has seen [several] 'tar-heroin' samples...tar-heroin can be any of a large variance in consistency (sticky – hard/brittle) and coloring (light – dark). Tar-heroin samples often contain lots of sugars due to the nature of the processing. When sugars are heated to extreme temperatures, they can form a hardened, sort of 'glass-like' sheet. Past submissions that look similar to the photo [previous page], would still classify as tar-heroin as opposed to any 'new form' per say."² However, TFO reporting indicates that this particular type of heroin is previously unidentified within San Francisco, and is highly desirable amongst users, because users consider it better quality than the commonly available black tar-heroin.

(U//FOUO) Glass retains identifiable characteristics common with other heroin forms. According to the TFOs who seized the heroin sample, the heroin still possesses a vinegar-like smell common with other forms of heroin due to the nature of heroin production, but the smell is less noticeable than typical tar-heroin samples. Other notable characteristics include its color – light to dark brown; a glassy translucent appearance with high sheen; harder texture than typical tar-heroin samples; and primarily cut with Coca-Cola, however Fentanyl has been identified as a cutting agent in some samples.

(U//FOUO) Glass is popular amongst heroin users due to its potency. Dependent heroin users consider glass-style heroin to be better quality than the more commonly available black tar heroin. Many users favor this concentrated form of heroin, and those who can afford it are willing to pay higher prices for it because of its stronger effects. TFO reporting indicates that an individual dose of glass style heroin sells for approximately \$20-\$25 at the street level, and that individual doses of glass-style heroin are typically smaller (due to their concentration) than the less expensive black tar-heroin. Some samples have contained fentanyl and pose a serious health risk to users and LE.

(U) Implications

(U//FOUO) Due to this heroin's popularity amongst heroin users, LE may witness this particular type of heroin increase in availability throughout the NC HIDTA AOR. Additionally, unexperienced and experienced heroin users alike face an increased risk of overdose due to their inexperience with an unfamiliar and new form of heroin. Users and TFOs are also at increased risk due to the presence of fentanyl, an undetectable cutting agent, in some samples. LE throughout the NC HIDTA AOR should be on the lookout for glass-style heroin and other heroin concentrates.

(U) Sources

¹ (U) Interview with NC HIDTA San Francisco Metropolitan Initiative (SFMETRO) Task Force Officer Britt Elmore.

² (U) Interview with DEA Senior Forensic Chemist Jason Henniger